

Parashat Vayeshev

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JOSEPH'S CHARACTER

- What does the name “Joseph” mean?
 - How did Joseph perceive his status in his father’s house? How did his brothers and father perceive it?
 - What do Joseph’s dreams mean? Are they prophetic, or are they merely expressing Joseph’s ambitions?
 - What was the brothers’ true motive for selling Joseph?
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A. Introduction

“The
descendants
of Jacob –
Joseph”

“And Jacob lived in the land where his father had lived, in the land of Canaan. These are the descendants of Jacob – Joseph was seventeen years old...” (Gen. 37:1-2).

וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ
מִגֹּרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן: אֵלֶּה תְּלֻדֹת
יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן שִׁבְעֵ
עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה...
(בראשית ל"ז, א-ב)

The next three *parashot* recount the story of Joseph’s life. Of the twelve tribes descended from Jacob, Joseph’s narrative stands out; the opening phrase of this *parasha*: “These are the descendants of Jacob – Joseph...” indicates that out of all of Jacob’s children, Joseph is considered his “descendant” (i.e., his heir). However, while Joseph’s narrative is as long and detailed as those of the Patriarchs,¹ there is a

1 The reason for the Torah’s focus on Joseph is explained by Rabbenu Bahya:

“אלה תולדות יעקב יוסף” - היה ראוי שיוזכר תולדותיו כולו, אבל דרך הפשט כלל תולדותיו ביוסף להורות שהוא כלול מכל מעלות שאר אחיו. וכן דרשו רז”ל, כל מעלות מדות השבטים היו בו, בכורתו של ראובן, שנאמר (דברי הימים א ה’ א): “ובחללו יצועי אביו נתנה בכורתו ליוסף”, מלכותו של יהודה שנאמר (בראשית מ”ב, ו): “יוסף הוא השליט על הארץ”, נבואתו של לוי (שם מ”א, ג): “ויהי כאשר פתח לנו בן הים”, חכמתו של יששכר שנאמר (שם): “אין נבון וחכם כמוך”. ועל דרך המדרש: “אלה תולדות יעקב יוסף” - הקיש יוסף ליעקב מפני שהיה דומה לו, שנאמר: “כי בן זקונים הוא לוי”, שהיה זיו איקונין שלו דומה לאביו, ועוד שהיה דומה לו בכל עניניו... עי”ש.

“These are the descendants of Jacob – Joseph” - all of his descendants should have been mentioned, but the simple reading is that he included all of his descendants by [mentioning] Joseph because [Joseph] encompassed all of his brothers’ virtues. And so our Sages stated: Joseph possessed all of the virtues of the tribes; he had Reuben’s birthright, as it is stated: ‘And since he defiled his father’s sheets his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph’ (I Chr.

fundamental difference between them. The Patriarchs were individual figures – they were unequivocally selected over their brothers, who were rejected from being part of the chosen nation. Joseph, on the other hand, is one of twelve brothers, all of whom are included in the House of Jacob.²

5:1); he had Judah’s kingship, as it is stated: ‘And Joseph was the ruler of the land’ (Gen. 42:6); he had Levi’s prophecy: ‘And as he had interpreted for us, so it happened’ (Gen. 41:13); and he had Issachar’s wisdom, as it is stated: ‘There are none so clever and wise as you’” (ibid.).

Homiletically, “These are the descendants of Jacob – Joseph” [can be interpreted as follows] – Joseph is juxtaposed to Jacob because he looked like him, as it is stated: “For he was a son for [Jacob] in his old age [zekunim]” – for his appearance [zivikunin] was similar to his father’s, and he was like him in all his ways...

2 Although there is an element of rejection in Jacob’s family as well with Reuben’s dismissal from the birthright:

וַיִּבֶן רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי אֶתֶּה. כַּחֲזִי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי יִתֵּר שְׂאֵת וְיִתֵּר עָו: פָּחוּ כַּמִּים אֶל תּוֹתֵר כִּי עֲלִיתָ מִשְׁכְּבֵי אָבִיךָ אִזָּ חֲלַלְתָּ יְצוּעֵי עֲלֶיהָ:

“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power. Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father’s bed, onto my sheets and defiled them” (Gen. 49:3-4).

וַיִּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי הוּא הַבְּכֹר וּבְחַלְלוֹ יְצוּעֵי אָבִיו נִתְּנָה בְּכֹרְתוֹ לְבְנֵי יוֹסֵף בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא לְהַתְּנִיחַ לְבְּכֹרָה: כִּי יְהוּדָה גִּבֹּר בְּאַחֲזִיו וְלִנְגִיד מִמֶּנּוּ וְהַבְּכֹרָה לְיוֹסֵף:

“And the sons of Reuben, firstborn of Israel – for he is the firstborn, and since he defiled his father’s sheets his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, son of Israel, and he could not be associated with the birthright; since Judah was the strongest of his brothers, the ruler came from him, and the birthright was given to Joseph” (I Chr. 5:1-2).

In any event, the Torah explicitly states that Reuben is still considered the firstborn, even after the birthright was taken from him. He will still inherit a share of Jacob’s house and receive his own portion of land. The Talmud explains:

ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר “האספו ואגידה לכם” ביקש יעקב לגלות לבניו קץ הימים

Although Rachel was the center of the home, Jacob's home was filled with Leah's children, while Rachel was barren.⁴

Leah's Status – Based on Children

Leah, on the other hand, married Jacob through Laban's deceit. Although her marriage to Jacob was, of course, according to God's will,⁵ Leah was not necessarily destined for the role of a mother of the House of Jacob. How did Leah achieve this status? By having children:

And God saw that Leah was despised, and He opened her womb, and Rachel was barren. (Gen. 29:31)

וַיִּרְא ה' כִּי שְׂנוֹאָה לְאֵה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת רִחְמָהּ וְרַחֵל עֲקָרָה. (בראשית כ"ט, לא)

God blesses Leah with children, thus raising her to the status of a Matriarch and infusing her marriage to Jacob with deeper significance.

This idea is expressed in the following *midrash*:

Rabbi Hanin in the name of Rabbi Shmuel in the name of Rabbi Yitzhak said: Since our Patriarch Jacob saw that Leah deceived her sister, he thought to divorce her. And when God

רבי חנין בשם רבי שמואל בר רבי יצחק אמר: כיון שראה אבינו יעקב מעשים שרימה לאה באחותה נתן דעתו לגרשה. וכיון

4 The paradox of *akkarut* [barrenness] vs. *ikkarut* [core importance] also characterized the previous Matriarchs, Sarah (Gen. 15:1) and Rebecca (Gen. 25:21). This also hints to Rachel's crucial role in continuing the line of the Matriarchs.
5 For an extensive discussion of this topic, see our lesson on *Parashat Vayetze*.

gave her children, he said: Shall I divorce the mother of these children?! (Bereshit Rabba on Gen. 29:31)

שפקדה הקב"ה בבנים אמר: לאמן של אלו אני מגרש?! (בראשית רבה שם)

This can be understood as Jacob simply realizing that he cannot divorce the mother of his children. However, Jacob may have recognized an even deeper message: since God opened Leah's womb and blessed her with children, his marriage to Leah was indeed according to God's plan. Jacob understands that Leah is worthy of becoming a Matriarch and a partner in establishing the House of Jacob, and that he should not divorce her.⁶

Leah's efforts to be included in the House of Jacob are expressed in the names she gives her children. Each son is given a name that expresses her longing to be recognized by Jacob.⁷

6 This is also evident from a simple reading of the verses that describe Jacob's reaction to Rachel's outburst:

וַתֵּרֶא רַחֵל כִּי לֹא יִלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב וַתִּקְנֵא רַחֵל בְּאָחוֹתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵל יַעֲקֹב הֲבֵה לִי בָנִים וְאִם אֵין מִתָּה אֲנֹכִי וַיַּחַר אַף יַעֲקֹב בְּרַחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲתַחַת אֱלֹקִים אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר מָנַע מִמֶּנִּי פְרִי בְטֶן.

And Rachel saw that she had not given Jacob children, and Rachel envied her sister, and she said to Jacob, "Bring me children, and if not, I will die." And Jacob became angry with Rachel, and he said, "Am I instead of God, Who has prevented you from having children?" (Gen. 30:1-2)

Jacob understood that Rachel's barrenness and Leah's fertility were both of divine origin.

7 As the Torah describes in the previous *parasha*:

...וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן כִּי אָמְרָה כִּי רְאָה ה' בְּעַנְיִי כִּי עָתִיד יֵאָדְבֵנִי אִישִׁי ... וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי שָׁמַע ה' כִּי שְׂנוּאָה אֲנֹכִי וַיִּתֵּן לִי גַם אֶת זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן... וַתֹּאמֶר עָתִיד הַפְּעַם יִלְדָה אִישִׁי אֵלָי כִּי יִלְדֹתַי לוֹ שְׁלֵשָׁה בָנִים עַל כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי... וַתֹּאמֶר לְאֵה וְבָדְנִי

Anticipation
of Joseph's
Birth

Leah's many births are directly contrasted with Rachel's barrenness:

And God saw that Leah was despised, and He opened her womb, and Rachel was barren. (Gen. 29:31)

וַיִּרְא ה' כִּי שְׂנוֹאָה לְאָה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת רִחְמָהּ וְרַחֵל עֲקָרָה. (בראשית כ"ט, לא)

Leah gives birth, Rachel waits to become pregnant. While Jacob has many children, he, too, is always waiting for the one irreplaceable child: Rachel's

אֱלֹהִים אֶתִּי וְגַד טוֹב הַפְּעַם יוֹבְלֵנִי אִישִׁי כִּי יִלְדֵתִי לוֹ שִׂשְׁהָ בָנִים וְתִקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ יְרֻבֵּן.

And she named him Reuben, for she said, "God has seen my destitution, for now my husband shall love me..." And she said, "As God heard that I am despised and He has given me this one as well," and she named him Simeon... And she said, "This time my husband will become attached to me, for I have given him three sons," and so she named him Levi... And Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons," and she named him Zebulun. (Gen. 29:32-34)

Jacob's sons were no doubt aware of the intense feelings that surrounded their birth. After all, they were named for these tensions, and a child tends to ask his parents the meaning of his name. Leah's honest answer would be, "I hoped that your birth would bring me closer to your father," or "I hoped that when you were born I would have equal status with Rachel." A child with such a loaded name would naturally have difficulty processing this. In this case, though, the child would also become aware of the fact that establishing the House of Jacob is a momentous process, and that one's status in his father's house carries eternal significance.

Another example of the brothers' emotional involvement is their active participation in the process (Reuben went to gather mandrakes for his mother in order to help her become pregnant).

child.⁸ When Joseph was born, the household must have celebrated – finally, Rachel's longed-for son has arrived.

JOSEPH – ADDITION OF BOUNTY AND BLESSINGS

What is this long-awaited son named?

"God Shall
Add another
Son to Me"

And [Rachel] became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and she said, "God has gathered my shame." And she named him Joseph, saying, "God shall add [yosef] another son to me." (Gen. 30:23-24)

וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְפֹּף אֱלֹהִים אֶת חַרְפְּתִי: וַתִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר יוֹסֵף ה' לִי בֵּן אַחֵר. (שם ל' כג-כד)

Surprisingly, he is not named for any special quality of his own, but for the additional son⁹ to be born

- 8 Rachel's anticipation was so strong that it cast tension over the entire family. Naturally, Jacob wanted to have a son with his beloved wife. Leah and her children may have felt the same – after all, Rachel's having a child should lessen the tensions between Rachel and Leah (see the end of the *midrash* in note 9). However, their anticipation might have been mixed with concern that if Rachel were to have a child, the status of Leah and her children would be lowered as a result. These tensions and expectations surrounding Rachel's pregnancy lie at the heart of the story of the tribes' birth.
- 9 In this sense, Joseph's name is similar to the names Leah gave her children: Leah's sons are named for her desire to be recognized by Jacob (see note 8), while Rachel's son is named for her longing for another son, so as to take further part in building the House of Jacob. The *midrash* states:

עיקר ברייתה של דינה זכר היה, ומתפילת רחל שאמרה "יוסף ה' לי בן אחר" נעשית נקבה. אמר ר' חנינה בן פוי: אמהות נביאות היו, ורחל הייתה מן האימהות. "יוסף ה' לי בנים אחרים" לא נאמר, אלא "בן אחר"; אמרה: "עוד אחד עתיד להעמיד, ולנוי יהיה ממני". אמר ר' חנינה: נתכנסו אימהות ואמרו "דיינו זכרים, תיפקד זו".

Dina had been conceived as a male, but through Rachel's prayer that "God shall add another son to me" she became

after him.

**Joseph -
Addition of
Life**

In fact, this in itself seems to be Joseph's most distinctive quality – **the ability to add life and fertility.** This ability is first expressed through his own birth, which relieves Rachel from barrenness, and again through the birth of an additional son, Benjamin.¹⁰

female. Rabbi Hanina ben Pazi said: the Matriarchs were prophetesses, and Rachel was one of the Matriarchs. "God shall add more sons to me" was not said, only "an additional son." She said [to herself], "There will be one more son, and I hope he will be from me." Rabbi Hanina said: the [other] Matriarchs gathered together and said, "We have had enough sons; let this one become pregnant."

¹⁰ Joseph's birth is described as a particularly special event. Immediately after his birth, Jacob asks Laban:

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה רַחֵל אֶת יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל לְבֵן שְׁלֹחֶיהָ וְאֵלָכֶה אֶל מְקוֹמִי וְלֹאֲרָצִי: תֵּנֶנּוּ אֶת נָשָׁי וְאֶת יְלָדֵי אֲשֶׁר עִבַּדְתִּי אִתְּכֶם בְּהֵן וְאֵלָכֶה כִּי אֲתֵנָה יָדְעֵת אֶת עִבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר עִבַּדְתִּיךָ.

And it was when Rachel gave birth to Joseph, and Jacob said to Laban, "Send me forth and I shall go to my land and my place. Give me my wives and my children with whom I worked for you, and I will leave, for you know the work that I have done for you." (Gen. 30:35-37)

Why does Jacob request to return home specifically after Joseph's birth? Rashbam and Hizkuni explain that Jacob had completed the period of time for which he had committed to work for Laban in exchange for Rachel's hand in marriage. Alternatively, Jacob may have recognized Joseph's birth as a sign that God's blessing was given not only to Leah, but to his beloved Rachel as well. He interpreted this as the fulfillment of God's promise to him when he left Canaan:

וְהָיָה וְרָעַךְ כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ וּפְרָצְתָּ יָמָה וְקָדְמָה וְצַפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה וְנִבְרָכְוּ בְךָ כָּל מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה וּבְיָרְעֵךְ: וְהָיָה אֲנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וְשָׁמְרְתִיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ וְהִשְׁבַּתִיךָ אֶל הָאָדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֲעֻבְדְּךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם עָשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לְךָ:

"And your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will burst forth westward and eastward, northward and southward, and all of the families of the earth shall be blessed through you and your descendants. And behold, I am with you, and I will watch over you through all of

This gift will continue to express itself throughout *Parashat Vayeshev*.

**First Hints
of Joseph's
Uniqueness**

At the beginning of the *parasha*, Joseph has a special status in Jacob's house (Gen. 37:3-11). This is illustrated by his exceptional dreams, which are interpreted both by Joseph and by his brothers as an expression of Joseph's desire to lead and rule over the House of Jacob.

**From the
Heights to
the Depths...**

This special status causes a great deal of tension between Joseph and his brothers, which ultimately leads to Joseph plummeting to the lowest possible station – slavery (Gen. 37:12-36). Joseph's humiliation at being sold as a slave is intensified by the fact that his own brothers were the ones who sold him.

**...And from
the Depths
to the
Heights**

Even so, we are not told anything of Joseph's difficulties; in fact, quite the reverse – in short order Joseph rises to a position of prominence:

וַיְהִי ה' אִתּוֹ יוֹסֵף וְהָיָה אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרָיִם וַיִּרְא אֲדֹנָיו

your journeys, and I will return you to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done as I have said to you" (Gen. 28:14-15).

Jacob was promised both descendants and the inheritance of the land of Israel. He understands that the first part of the blessing was fulfilled by Rachel's giving birth to Joseph, which signals that it is time to fulfill the second part of the blessing – inheriting the land of Israel. Therefore, he decides to return to Canaan.

Ultimately Jacob remains with Laban at Laban's request in order to watch over his flock. But God's blessing was upon

God was with him, and that God made all that he did successful. And Joseph found favor in his eyes, and he served him. And he appointed [Joseph] overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it was from the time that he appointed him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that God blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and God's blessing was upon all that he had in the house and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hands; and, having him, he knew of nothing besides the bread he ate. And Joseph was handsome in looks and countenance. (Gen. 39:2-6)

כי ה' אתו וכל אשר הוא עשה ה' מצליח בידו: וימצא יוסף חן בעיניו וישתת אתו ויפקדהו על ביתו וכל יש לו נתן בידו: ויהי מאז הפקיד אתו בביתו ועל כל אשר יש לו ויברך ה' את בית המצרי בגלל יוסף ויהי ברכת ה' בכל אשר יש לו בבית ובשדה: ויעוב כל אשר לו ביד יוסף ולא ידע אתו מאומה כי אם הלחם אשר הוא אוכל ויהי יוסף יפה תאר ויפה מראה. (שם ל"ט, ב-ו)

Through Joseph's unique gift, he becomes successful and manages to avoid part of the reality of slavery. He becomes a "successful man" while overseeing his master Potiphar's house.

God's Blessing in All Matters

While Joseph's character is more practical than spiritual, the Torah emphasizes that Joseph's success

him from that point onward, even while still in Haran: "And the man burst forth and grew exceedingly prosperous, and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and slaves, and camels and donkeys" (Gen. 30:43).

is due to Divine Providence. God even blesses those associated with Joseph: "And God blessed the house of the Egyptian because of Joseph" (Gen. 39:5). "God's blessing" indicates material bounty, which demonstrates that Joseph's gift is effective not only in matters of fertility, but financially and in other **material** matters as well.¹¹

Falling and Rising, Again

After reaching a high position in Potiphar's house, Joseph is thrown into prison following the incident with Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7-20).¹² But there, too, Joseph is not humiliated – he immediately rises again:

And God was with Joseph ;He showed him kindness and made him favorable in the eyes of the warden of the prison. And the warden of the prison put all of the prisoners in Joseph's charge, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden of the prison paid

ויהי ה' את יוסף ויט אליו חסד ונתן חנו בעיני שר בית הסהר: ונתן שר בית הסהר ביד יוסף את כל האסירים אשר בבית הסהר ואת כל אשר עשים שם הוא היה עשה: אין שר בית

11 The Sages also describe Joseph's gift of effecting bounty and blessings:

בן פורת יוסף בן פורת עלי עין... זרעו של יוסף אין עין הרע שולטת בהם. "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring..." – evil has no power over Joseph's children. (*Brachot* 20a)

12 It is interesting to note that Joseph's ordeal with Potiphar's wife was related specifically to the matter of fertility, which is Joseph's special strength. Perhaps he was tested in this area specifically because of his gift. This idea is discussed at length in various works on *Kabbala* and Hasidism; see: *Sefat Emet*, *Vayechi* 5651; *Shem MiShmuel*, *Shmot* 5671 and others.

no attention to anything under Joseph's care, for God was with him, and whatever he did God made successful. (Gen. 39:21-23)

הַסֵּהר רָאָה אֶת כָּל מְאוּמָה בְּיָדוֹ בְּאֶשֶׁר ה' אִתּוֹ וְאֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹשֶׂה ה' מִצְלִיחַ: (שם, כא-כג)

Once again, Joseph is remarkably successful: from his station as a lowly prisoner, he manages to reach a respectable status in the prison. Here, too, Joseph succeeds in **material** matters, but the source for this success is divine.

Interpreting the Dreams and Giving Practical Advice

After Joseph interprets the dreams of the head butler and head baker, he is invited to interpret Pharaoh's dream as well (Gen. 40:1-41:32). But Joseph does not merely interpret the dream; he offers advice on how to proceed:

“And now let Pharaoh seek out a clever and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. And let Pharaoh act and set overseers over the land of Egypt. And let them gather all of the food of these good years that are to come, and stock a fifth-part of the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. And let them gather all of the food of the coming good years and stock the produce under Pharaoh's charge, and keep it. And this food shall insure

וְעַתָּה יִרְאֵה פִּרְעֹה אִישׁ נָבוֹן וְחָכָם וַיִּשִׂיתֵהוּ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּעֲשֶׂה פִּרְעֹה וַיִּפְקֹד פְּקָדִים עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַחֲמִשׁ אֶת אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁבְעַ שָׁנֵי הַשָּׁבָע: וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת כָּל אֲכָל הַשָּׁנִים הַטֹּבֹת הַבָּאִתָּה הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּצְבְּרוּ בְּרַתְחַת יַד פִּרְעֹה אֲכָל בְּעָרִים וַשְּׁמְרוּ: וְהָיָה הָאֲכָל לִפְקֻדֹן לְאֶרֶץ לְשִׁבְעַ

the land against the seven years of famine that will come upon the land of Egypt, and the land shall not perish in hunger.” (Gen. 41:33-36)

שְׁנֵי הָרָעָב אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶינָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא תִכָּרֵת הָאָרֶץ בְּרָעָב: (בראשית מ"א, לג-לו)

Joseph advises Pharaoh on how to manage the coming events depicted by his dreams. While the dreams reveal what is to happen in the future, the course of events can be affected by human actions.

Joseph's advice is intelligent and practical. He does not, for example, suggest that Pharaoh pray; he gives pragmatic suggestions on how to deal with the situation.

Pharaoh appreciates Joseph's advice:

And this thing was very good in Pharaoh's eyes and in the eyes of all of his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Is there anyone like this man, in whom the Divine Spirit resides?” (Gen. 41:37-38)

וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי פִּרְעֹה וּבְעֵינֵי כָל עֲבָדָיו: וַיֹּאמֶר פִּרְעֹה אֶל עֲבָדָיו הַנִּמְצָא כָּהֵן אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ: (שם, לו-לח)

A Man in Whom the Divine Spirit Resides

Pharaoh appreciates the value of Joseph's advice, but he also recognizes that Joseph's abilities are not purely human – they are a gift from God. Once again, the Torah emphasizes Joseph's exceptional management capabilities, and his ability to effect blessing with God's assistance.

From Prisoner to Second in Command

At this point, Pharaoh decides to appoint Joseph as his second in command:

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “After God has told you all of this, there is none so clever and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my house, and all of my nation shall embrace your word; I shall only keep the throne above you.” And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See that I have appointed you over all of the land of Egypt.” And Pharaoh removed his ring from his hand and placed it upon Joseph’s hand, and he dressed him in clothes of linen and placed a gold chain around his neck. And he made Joseph ride in his second chariot, and they called before him, “Bow!” and he set him over the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man shall raise his hand or foot in all of the land of Egypt.” (Gen. 41:39-44)

וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל יוֹסֵף אַחֲרֵי הוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹהִים אוֹתְךָ אֵת כָּל זֹאת אֵין נָבוֹן וְחָכָם כְּמוֹךָ: אֶתְּהָ תִהְיֶה עַל בֵּיתִי וְעַל פִּיךָ יִשְׁק כָּל עַמִּי רַק הַכִּסֵּא אֶגְדֹּל מִמֶּךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל יוֹסֵף רְאֵה נָתַתִּי אוֹתְךָ עַל כָּל אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: וַיִּסֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתֵּן אוֹתָהּ עַל יַד יוֹסֵף וַיַּלְבֵּשׂ אוֹתוֹ בְּגָדֵי שֵׁשׁ וַיַּשֶּׂם רֶבֶד הַזָּהָב עַל צַוְאָרוֹ: וַיַּרְכַּב אוֹתוֹ בְּמִרְכָּבַת הַמִּשְׁנָה אֲשֶׁר לוֹ וַיִּקְרָאוּ לִפְנֵי אֲבִירְךָ וַנִּתּוֹן אוֹתוֹ עַל כָּל אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל יוֹסֵף אֲנִי פַרְעֹה וּבְלֹעַדֶיךָ לֹא יָרִים אִישׁ אֵת יָדוֹ וְאֵת רַגְלוֹ בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: (שם, לט-מד)

From the lowest possible rank – a prisoner – Joseph reaches the highest possible position – the king’s second in command. Using his intelligence and

talents, he arranges for food to be stored during the years of plenty and distributed during the years of famine. The Torah describes how the nation came to rely on Joseph:

And all of the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, for the famine was great over all of the earth. (Gen. 41:57)

וְכָל הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ מִצְרַיִם לְשָׂבוֹר אֶל יוֹסֵף כִּי חָזַק הָרָעָב בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ: (מ"א, נו)

Joseph – Bounty from God

Joseph’s name, which literally means “will add [yosef],” reflects his essence: **enhancement of blessing, bounty and life**. He is able to manage and resolve difficult situations, rising to ever greater heights. He has an extraordinary ability to channel God’s blessings and bounty. Throughout the narrative it is clear that God is the source of this bounty; this, too, is reflected in Joseph’s name, as Rachel explains: “**God will add [yosef]**” (Gen. 30:24).

The Blessings of Jacob and Moses to Joseph

Joseph’s strength is also mentioned in Jacob’s blessing:

“Because of the God of your fathers, He has helped you; and *Sha-kkai*, He has blessed you with blessings of the skies above, blessings of the deep springs below, blessings of the breast and womb.” (Gen. 49:25)

מֵאֵל אָבִיךָ וַיַּעֲזֶרְךָ וְאֵת שֵׁ-דֵי וַיְבָרְכֶךָ בְּרִכַּת שָׁמַיִם מֵעַל בְּרִכַּת תְּהוֹם רַבְּצוֹת תַּחַת בְּרִכַּת שְׂדֵיִם וְרֶחֶם. (בראשית מ"ט, כה)

This element is repeated in Moses’ blessings to the

twelve tribes:

And to Joseph he said, “His land is blessed by God with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below; with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield; with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills; with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of Him who dwelt in the burning bush. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.” (Deut. 33:13-16)

וליוסף אמר
מברכת ה' ארצו
ממגד שמים מטל
ומתהום רבצת
תחת: וממגד
תבואת שמש
וממגד גרש ירחים:
ומראש הררי קדם
וממגד גבעות
עולם: וממגד ארץ
ומלאה ורצון שכני
סנה תבואתה
לראש יוסף
ולקדקד נזיר אחיו:
(דברים ל"ג, יג-טז)

C. Joseph's Responsibility and Judah's Leadership

OVERT AND HIDDEN TENSIONS BETWEEN JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Transferring
the Birthright
to Joseph

In addition to his unique ability to conduct material blessings, Joseph is also given the birthright:

And the sons of Reuben, firstborn of Israel – for he is the firstborn, and since he defiled his father's sheets **his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph**, son of Israel, and he could not be associated with the birthright; since Judah was the strongest of his brothers, the ruler came from him, **and the birthright was given to Joseph.** (1 Chr. 5:1-2)

ובני ראובן בכור
ישראל כי הוא
הבכור ובחללו יצועי
אביו נתנה בכרתו
לבני יוסף בן
ישראל ולא להתניח
לבכרה: כי יהודה גבר
באחיו ולנגיד ממנו
והבכרה ליוסף:
(דברי הימים א ה'
א-ב)

Double Portion,
Double
Responsibility

After the incident between Reuben and Bilha, the birthright was taken from Reuben¹³ and given to Joseph. Thus, Joseph inherits two portions of land:¹⁴

“And now the two sons that were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, Ephraim and Menashe,

ועתה שני בניך הנוולדים
לך בארץ מצרים עד
באי אליך מצרימה
לי הם אפרים ומנשה

¹³ See Gen. 35:25, 49:3-4. Our next lessons will discuss the respective positions of Reuben and Judah.

¹⁴ The firstborn receives a double portion of inheritance, as he takes upon himself the responsibility of running the family

shall be to me as Reuben and Simeon...” And he blessed them that day, saying, “Through you Israel will be blessed, saying, ‘May God make you as Ephraim and Menashe,’” and he put Ephraim before Menashe. And Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am dying, and God will be with you and return you to the land of your forefathers. And I shall give you one portion of land more than your brothers, that which I took from the hands of the Amorites with my sword and bow.” (Gen. 48: 5-22)

כראובן ושמעון יהיו לי... ויברכם ביום ההוא לאמור בך יברך ישראל לאמור ישמך אלקים באפריים וכמנשה וישם את אפריים לפני מנשה: ויאמר ישראל אל יוסף הנה אנכי מת והיה אלקים עמכם והשיב אתכם אל ארץ אבותיכם: ואני נתתי לך שכר אחד על אחיך אשר לקחתי מיד האמורי בחרבי ובקשתי: (בראשית מ"ח, ה-כב)

(see our lesson on *Parashat Toledot* for an extensive discussion of this point). The Ramban suggests a similar interpretation:

“ואני נתתי לך” – ואני כבר נתתי לך בארץ ההיא החלק האחד אשר בידי לתת, והוא חלק הבכורה, להיותך בו יתר על אחיך מיום שלקחתי אותו מיד האמורי בחרבי ובקשתי.

“And I have given you – “And I have already given you in that land the portion that I was able to give, **and this is the portion of the firstborn**, for you to be greater than your brothers, from the day that I took it from the hands of the Amorites with my sword and bow. (Ramban on Gen. 48:22)

Rashi, however, interpreted Joseph’s second portion of land as a reward for his efforts toward burying his father in the Land of Israel:

“ואני נתתי לך” – לפי שאתה טורח להתעסק בקבורתי וגם אני נתתי לך נחלה שתקבר בה, ואיוו – זו שכר, שנאמר (יהושע כ"ד, לב): “זאת עצמות יוסף אשר העלו בני ישראל ממצרים קברו בשכם.”

“And I have given you” – Since you have gone to great

Joseph takes upon himself the **responsibility to support the House of Jacob** and manage the family financially,¹⁵ and he is therefore given two portions of land. Thus Joseph, in a way, becomes the firstborn (see Deut. 21:15-17).

The Leadership is Not Transferred to Joseph

However, Joseph does not assume a **leadership** role in the family; this is given to **Judah**, as described in the verses in Chronicles and in the blessings of Jacob and Moses.¹⁶

Joseph’s Grand Dreams

Joseph was not necessarily predestined to be passed over for leadership. At the beginning of his life, Joseph does hold a special position in Jacob’s house. This is especially evident in the story of Joseph’s dreams:

And he said to them, “Please, hear this dream that I have dreamed. Behold, we were gathering sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf stood upright, and behold, your sheaves turned and bowed to my sheaf.” And he dreamed

ויאמר אליהם שמעו נא החלום הזה אשר חלמתי: והנה אנחנו מאלמים בתוך השדה והנה קמה אלמתי וגם נצבה והנה תסבינה אלמתי... ותשתחוין לאלמתי...

lengths for my burial, I have given you a portion of land for your own burial. Which plot of land is this? It is Shekhem, as it says (Josh. 24:32): “And Joseph’s bones which the Children of Israel had taken up from Egypt, they buried in Shekhem.” (Rashi on Gen. 48:22)

15 Joseph explicitly states: “‘And now, do not fear; I shall provide for you and your children,’ and he comforted them and spoke to their hearts” (Gen. 50:21).

16 See our forthcoming lesson on *Parashat Mikketz* for further discussion of this topic.

another dream and told it to his brothers, and he said, “Behold, I have dreamed a dream again, and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing to me.” (Gen. 37:6-9)

וַיַּחְלֹם עוֹד חֲלוֹם אֲחֵר וַיְסַפֵּר אֹתוֹ לְאֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלֹמְתֵי חֲלוֹם עוֹד וְהִנֵּה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחַד עָשָׂר כּוֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לִי. (שם ל"ז, ו-ט)

Joseph has two dreams; in both of them, he sees objects that represent his family bowing down to him. How are these dreams understood?

Their interpretation seems obvious:

And his brothers said to him, “Shall you indeed rule over us; shall you indeed reign over us...?” And his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and brothers and I indeed come and bow to the ground before you?” (Gen. 37:8-9)

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו הֲמִלְךָ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם מִשׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ... וַיִּגְעַר בּוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתָּ הֲבֹא נָבוֹא אֲנִי וְאֶמְךָ וְאֶחָיֶךָ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְךָ אֶרְצָה: (שם, ח-ט)

Both Jacob and his sons interpret Joseph’s dreams as reflecting Joseph’s ambitions and his desire to rule. Joseph seems to interpret them this way as well; he aspires to become the leader of the House of Jacob.

Joseph’s brothers do not accept his dream;¹⁷ they do

¹⁷ Apparently, the brothers did not see Joseph’s dreams as prophetic; rather, they were simply expressions of his subconscious desires.

The Brothers
Oppose
Joseph’s
Leadership

not consider him fit for leadership. Why?

First, their hatred of him, as described at the beginning of the *parasha* – “And they hated him, and they could not speak peacefully to him” – could certainly have caused them to doubt his leadership abilities.¹⁸ But beyond their natural jealousy and competitiveness, the brothers might have sensed that a **grave error** was set to occur. Jacob loved Joseph very much – he was the son of Jacob’s beloved, barren wife – and Joseph dreamed of greatness. The brothers, however, know Joseph’s nature. They feel that Joseph’s rising importance in Jacob’s house is inappropriate, and that he should not be allowed to rule over them.

Why did the brothers feel that Joseph was not worthy of leading them?

Before we answer this question, it should be noted that Jacob, too, ultimately concluded that Joseph was not suitable for leadership; as mentioned above, this role was later given to Judah (see Gen. 49:8-10). However, the brothers, who grew up with Joseph, already perceived during his youth that he was not fit to lead them.

The Torah foreshadows this conclusion in a number

¹⁸ Joseph’s special treatment led to conflicts with his brothers and with the maidservants’ sons as well (see Ibn Ezra on Gen. 37:2). However, this hostility was present even before Jacob began to express his preference for Joseph; the tension that surrounded the birth of each of the sons (see note 7) apparently remained throughout their upbringing.

of places:

Joseph chooses to inform his father of his brothers' misdeeds, rather than rebuke them and attempt to resolve the issue. This demonstrates his inability to influence his brothers positively and his ineffectiveness as a leader in his own right.

Joseph, "the young man, was with the sons of Bilha and the sons of Zilpah" (Gen. 37:2), the sons of the maidservants. To his other brothers, this may have indicated that Joseph could not handle leading more powerful elements, and instead preferred to associate with marginal groups in society.

In addition, the special treatment that Joseph received from his father led to his isolation from his brothers, further harming his chances of being able to lead them.

These signs can be interpreted in a number of ways – they are not absolute proof that Joseph was unfit to lead. At the same time, as Joseph is ultimately not chosen to lead the House of Jacob, these details can be interpreted as the first signs that Joseph is not suited for leadership.

The Sale of Joseph – From a Sense of Responsibility

This perspective may offer some insight into the brothers' cruel behavior in selling Joseph. Their decision to sell him was not motivated by anger or jealousy alone, but by a feeling of responsibility toward their family. They were aware of the episodes in their father's and grandfather's families in which

the unsuitable son was rejected completely and banished from the house (as was done to Ishmael and Esau). The brothers feel that it is their responsibility to act, and they banish Joseph, having judged him unfit to rule.

The brothers decide to act because they feel that Jacob cannot see what they see. In selling Joseph, the brothers perceive themselves as emulating their father – Jacob deceived Isaac in order to take Esau's blessing, so as to prevent Isaac from giving the blessing to someone unworthy of it. The brothers were attempting to prevent Jacob from passing on the leadership of the family to Joseph.

Indeed, when the brothers decide to sell Joseph they attribute their decision to his dreams, not to their hatred or jealousy:

And each man said to his brother, "Behold, here comes the **master of dreams**. And now, let us go and kill him and throw him into one of the pits, and we shall say that a wild animal has eaten him, **and let us see what will become of his dreams.**"
(Gen. 37:19-20)

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחָיו
הִנֵּה בָּעַל הַחֲלֻמוֹת
הַלְזָה בָּא: וְעַתָּה לְכוּ
וְנַהַרְגֵהוּ וְנִשְׁלֹכֵהוּ
בְּאֶחַד הַבְּרוֹת וְאָמְרֵנוּ
חַיָּה רָעָה אֲכָלָתוֹ
וְנִרְאֶה מָה יִהְיֶה
חֲלֻמוֹתָיו:
(ל"ז, יט-כ)

The brothers' hatred of Joseph and their decision to sell him has two levels of motivation: on the natural, human level, Jacob's preference of Joseph over his

brothers caused intense enmity and jealousy between them to the point that they were willing to kill him. But on a fundamental level, Joseph is truly unfit to be the leader of Jacob's household. The brothers sold him in order to prevent Jacob from making the mistake of appointing Joseph to lead.

The Sale of Joseph – Judah Comes to the Fore

This explanation may be difficult to accept. Some might still prefer to see the brothers' sale of Joseph as resulting from simple human hatred and jealousy rather than more lofty considerations. Even so, this incident can be read as an act of temporarily distancing Joseph from Jacob's house and rejecting him for leadership – but as a result of **God's will**. God causes the entire chain of events to take place under the “cover” of the brothers' jealousy and competitiveness. When Joseph is sold, he becomes aware of his truerole; this episode also allows Judah to display his leadership abilities.

THE MEANING OF JOSEPH'S DREAMS

Each Tribe's Unique Qualities

Jacob's twelve sons, who eventually produce the twelve tribes of Israel, each possess different strengths. Together, these gifts are used to found the nation of Israel.¹⁹ For this to happen, each tribe must become fully aware of its unique strengths and its proper role.

¹⁹ As opposed to the relationship between Jacob and Esau, where Esau was rejected totally while Jacob received both the material (Gen. 27:28-29) and the spiritual blessings (Gen. 28:3-4).

When Joseph is sold as a slave he is forced to leave Jacob's house, and his distance from his brothers allows each of them to develop properly:

Judah the Leader

A. Among the brothers remaining in Jacob's house, Judah emerges as the leader (see Gen. 37:26; 43:1-14; 44:18-34; 46:28).²⁰

Joseph the Governor

B. Joseph's special gift comes to light precisely because he loses his special status and is distanced from his family. In this situation his true nature reveals itself, as he says to his brothers when they are reunited:

<p>“And now do not be saddened nor angry that you sold me here, for God sent me before you to provide for you. For now the famine has lasted two years, and there are five more in which there will be no plowing or harvesting. And God sent me before you to give you a remnant in the land and to sustain you for a great deliverance. And now, it was not you who sent me here, but God...” (Gen. 45:5-8).</p>	<p>וְעַתָּה אַל תֵּעַצְבוּ וְאַל יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי הֲנֵה כִּי לְמַחְיָה שָׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם: כִּי זֶה שְׁנַתִּים הִרְעֵב בְּקָרֶב הָאָרֶץ וְעוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין חֲרִישׁ וְקִצִּיר: וַיִּשְׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם לְשׁוּם לָכֶם שְׂאִירֵית בְּאֶרֶץ וּלְהַחְיֹת לָכֶם לְפִלִּיטָה גְדֹלָה: וְעַתָּה לֹא אֲתֶם שָׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הֲנֵה כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים... (בראשית מ"ה, ה-ח)</p>
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After all of Joseph's trials, he understands his role in

²⁰ The story of Judah and Tamar also contributes to the development of Judah's character as a leader; see Rabbi Amnon Bazak's article on *Parashat Vayeshev*, “*Parashat Yehuda VeTamar*” at the Virtual Beit Midrash: www.vbm-torah.org.

the family: he is revealed to be particularly gifted in effecting material blessings, and he has become “the governor over the entire nation of the land.” In this sense, the brothers bow to him – they are dependent on him, as the Torah states:

<p>And Joseph was the ruler over the land, he was the governor over the entire nation of the land, and Joseph’s brothers came and they bowed to him with their faces to the ground. (Gen. 42:6)</p>	<p>וְיוֹסֵף הוּא הַשְּׁלִיט עַל הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשָׁבִיר לְכֹל עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֲחָיו יֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לוֹ אִפְסִים אֶרְצָה: (שם מ"ב, ו)</p>
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**Prophetic
Dream,
Mistaken
Interpretation**

At first, Joseph’s dreams seemed to be expression of his misplaced desire to rule, which did not come true. In fact, the dreams do come true – the brothers are now bowing down to Joseph! Joseph’s dreams were indeed prophetic – God showed Joseph his future, but He did not explicitly tell Joseph the **meaning** of his dreams. Joseph and his brothers attempted to interpret the dreams themselves,²¹ but just as Joseph

21 Joseph attempts to interpret his own dreams by himself, but he admits that he cannot interpret the dreams of the head butler, the head baker and Pharaoh without God’s assistance:

הֲלוֹא לְאֱלֹהִים פְּתוּרִים סִפְרוּ נָא לִי (מ', ח).
“For God holds the solutions; please tell me.” (Gen. 40:8)

פְּרָעָה אֵל יוֹסֵף הַלּוֹם הַלְמִתִּי וּפְתַר אִין אֲתוּ וַאֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי עֲלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר תִּשְׁמַע הַלּוֹם לְפִתְרֵךְ אֲתוּ: וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף אֶת פְּרָעָה לֵאמֹר בְּלִעְדֵי אֱלֹהִים יִעֲנֶה אֶת שְׁלוֹם פְּרָעָה (מ"א, טו-טז).

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have dreamed a dream and none can interpret it, and I have heard of you that you hear dreams and are able to interpret them.” And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me, God will give

had misunderstood his role in Jacob’s house, so too he misinterpreted his dreams and assumed they were signs of his future ruling position in Jacob’s family. The dreams were actually a prophecy that Joseph would lead his family **financially**, not that he would rule over them.²²

After many years in Egypt, cut off from his family, Joseph finally understands the message imparted by his dreams. His true place in Jacob’s family is **sustaining the family by channeling material blessing and bounty from God.**

Pharaoh an answer of peace.” (Gen. 41:16-17)

... אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹהִים עֲשָׂה הִרְאָה אֶת פְּרָעָה, (שם, כח).

“What God shall do, He has shown to Pharaoh.” (Gen. 41:28)

Joseph learned that dreams cannot be interpreted through human intelligence alone; God must help man understand His messages in dreams.

22 Joseph’s dream about the sheaves clearly hints to financial leadership. Hizkuni interprets this dream as follows:

“מאלמים אלומים” – כענין שחלם עלה לגדולה ונעשה מושל, כדכתיב ויצבור יוסף בר וגו’.

“ותשתחוון לאלומתי” – אות הוא כי העולם יצפו לתבואתו, כי הוא משביר לכל עם הארץ.

“Gathering sheaves” – he became great in the same field that he dreamed about, as the Torah states: “And Joseph stocked the produce,” etc.

“And they bowed to my sheaf” – it is a sign that the world would await his produce, for he “was the governor over the entire nation of the land.” (Hizkuni on Gen. 37:7)

See also Rabbi Elchanan Samet, “*Pesharam Shel Chalomot Yosef*” at the Virtual Beit Midrash: <http://www.etzion.org.il/vbm/archive/5-parsha/09vayesh.rtf>

MESSIAH, SON OF JOSEPH AND MESSIAH,
SON OF DAVID

In his work “*HaMisped BiYerushalayim*,”²³ Rav Kook describes Joseph’s nature and Judah’s nature as two central forces in the Jewish people:

Judah –
Spiritual
Strength;
Joseph –
Material
Strength

There are two individual forces in Israel: the force which is parallel to the human body, which desires the good of the nation and its material advancement, which is the true and good foundation...

And the other side is the force of spiritual advancement itself...

From the beginning these two general forces were given to the two tribes chosen to lead Israel: Ephraim and Judah. And as in the beginning, for “the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the sons,” Joseph was the governor... and he sustained Jacob and his sons materially... and Judah was selected for the special strength of Israel...

...הכין בישראל ביחוד...
שני הכחות: הכח
המקביל לערך הגוף
האנושי, השוקק לטובת
האומה במעמדה
ושכלולה החומרי,
שהוא הבסיס הנכון...

והצד השני עצם הכח
לשכלול הרוחניות
בעצמה...

והנה מתחילה הוכנו
ב' הכחות הכלליות
בשני השבטים שהוכנו
למלוך בישראל,
אפרים ויהודה. וכמו
בתחילה, מעשי אבות
סימן לבנים, יוסף היה
המשביר... והחיה
את יעקב ובניו בחיי
החומר... ויהודה מיוחד
לכח ישראל המיוחד...

23 This work was written following Theodor Herzl’s death. Its main claim is that secular Zionism is the “Messiah of the House of Joseph.”

The Purpose –
Uniting the
Forces

And the purpose of granting the kingship to the house of David was that **both of these forces would be united as one.**

It was not enough that they not clash with one another; rather, they must help one another... The forces were united by the House of Judah, which included the power of Joseph... and by uniting these two forces both of them are elevated...

Messiah, Son
of Joseph and
Messiah, Son of
David

And as these forces that strengthen spirituality are the attributes of the Messiah, Son of David... so too the efforts to strengthen the nation materially and in other practical ways are the attributes of the Messiah, Son of Joseph... (*Ma’amarei HaRe’aya* I, p. 94-99)

והנה תכלית בחירת מלכות בית דוד היה שיהיו ב' הכחות נכללים כאחד, ולא די שלא יהיו סותרים זה את זה כי אם עוד עוזרים זה לזה... היה הכל מאוחד בכח אחד על ידי עץ יהודה שהיה כולל גם כן כוחו של יוסף... ועל ידי קיבוץ ב' הכחות יחדיו היו שניהם מתעלים... וכמו שהכחות המגבירות את הרוחניות הם מכשירים למידת משיח בן דוד... כן ההתנערות לבקש חווק לאומי, חמרי, ויתר מכשירי החיים בכללים הם הכשרת משיח בן יוסף...

Rav Kook explains that Joseph’s nature continues to influence the nation during the monarchy; so too, in the days of the Messiah, the Messiah from the House of Joseph will prepare the nation materially for the Messiah from the House of David.²⁴

Each leader, each messiah, must be aware of his role, so that together they will be able to bring the nation of Israel to true wholeness and harmony.

24 See also *Kol HaTor* ch. 2 part I.